

MAIDSTONE BOROUGH COUNCIL

CABINET MEMBER FOR COMMUNITY AND LEISURE SERVICES

REPORT OF THE DIRECTOR FOR REGENERATION AND COMMUNITIES

Report prepared by: Jason Taylor

Date Issued: 2014

1. Maidstone Play Strategy - A Strategy for Outdoor Equipped Play Areas 2014-2024

1.1 Key Issue for Decision

1.1.1 To consider the adoption of the Maidstone Play Strategy – A Strategy for Outdoor Equipped Play Areas 2014-2024 and the actions within the document

1.2 Recommendation of the Director of Regeneration and Communities

1.2.1 That the draft Maidstone Play Strategy 2014-2024 is consulted on with all ward councillors and that they are asked for responses within 5 weeks.

1.2.2 Following this consultation period and taking into account any objections and representations received it is proposed that the Cabinet Member agrees to the following:

1.2.3 To adopt the Maidstone Play Strategy – A Strategy for Outdoor Equipped Play Areas 2014-2024.

1.2.4 Approve a new borough wide standard for equipped play “That most residents across the borough will live within 12 minutes walk of a good play area”

1.2.5 Agree to the allocation of capital funding to allow the improvement of all strategically important play areas to green and Amber standard.

1.2.6 That any non Strategically Important be offered to the community and added to the community right to bid list of assets

1.2.7 After one year any non-strategically important play areas that are not taken on by the community will have the play equipment removed, but will be retained as open space.

1.2.8 To agree the allocation of funding to support a grant scheme to allow Parish Councils to improve any strategically important play areas that they are responsible for.

1.3 Reasons for Recommendation

1.3.1 The Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure and officers visited the Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 22nd April 2013; and the Community, Leisure Services and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee on 26th July 2013. This was to discuss the work that had been done by officers on the Play Area Review and approval of a new play area strategic standard. The Scrutiny Committee Recommendation Action and Implementation Plan (SCRAIP) reports for both of these visits can be seen in Appendices B & C.

1.3.2 Following the scoring of the play areas in 2011, it was identified that, with the average cost of installing a new play area being around £75,000, it could take up to forty years to replace all of MBC's play area with the current budgets. Taking into account that play areas last about 15 years on average it became obvious that the current situation was not sustainable and that the standard of play areas would continue to deteriorate.

1.3.3 With this in mind it was decided to be proactive and to carry out a complete review of all of the play areas in the borough. This play review, carried out in 2012, looked not only at the standard of all play areas but also the distribution of all play areas across the borough.

1.3.4 The objectives of this review were to come up with recommendation for future standards for play provision, identify the cost to implement these standards and identify potential funding sources.

1.3.5 A summary of the findings of the Play Review were as follows:

1.3.6 51 out of 69 MBC play areas needed, or would need work within 5 years to reach/maintain green or amber standard.

1.3.7 There was no set standard for play provision

1.3.8 There are some areas of potential over provision in the borough.

1.3.9 Prior to any decision being made, the Cabinet Member for Communities and Leisure decided to take the findings of the Play Area Review and potential future management options to Communities Overview and Scrutiny committee to get their input. At

this meeting on 22nd April 2013 future options were presented to the committee.

- 1.3.10 These options were as follows:
- 1.3.11 That MBC adopt the standard that "most residents across the borough will live within 12 minutes walk of a good standard play area".
- 1.3.12 £1.8 million would be needed to get all MBC strategically important play areas to green standard.
- 1.3.13 20 MBC Non strategically important play areas would not be invested in.
- 1.3.14 Non-strategically important play areas would be offered to Community Groups or Parish Councils.
- 1.3.15 MBC would offer support to these groups.
- 1.3.16 If these play areas are not taken on, equipment would be removed when it needed repair and all equipment removed within 5 years, and the area left as open space.
- 1.3.17 Community, Leisure Services and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee at their meeting of 26th July 2013 made the following recommendations:
 - 1.3.18 A new borough wide standard of play provision being "that most residents across the borough will live within 12 minutes walk of a good standard play area".
 - 1.3.19 Available funding in future is targeted at these strategically important play areas.
 - 1.3.20 That any non-strategically important play areas be offered to the community and added to the community right to bid list of assets
 - 1.3.21 After one year any non- strategically important play areas that are not taken on by the public will have the equipment removed, but will be retained as open space for perpetuity.
- 1.3.22 With these recommendations in mind it is recommended that following consultation the Cabinet Member adopts the Maidstone Play Strategy – A Strategy for Outdoor Equipped Play Areas 2014-2024 and the actions within the document as detailed in this report.

1.4 Alternative Action and why not Recommended

1.4.1 The Cabinet Member could decide not to adopt the Maidstone Play Strategy – A Strategy for Outdoor Equipped Play Areas 2014-2024, however this is not recommended as this would result in the continuing decline of play areas across the borough.

1.5 Impact on Corporate Objectives

1.5.1 For Maidstone to be a decent place to live.

1.5.2 Continues to be a clean and attractive environment for people who live in and visit the Borough.

1.5.3 Residents are not disadvantaged because of where they live or who they are, vulnerable people are assisted and the level of deprivation is reduced

1.6 Risk Management

1.6.1 There may be objections to the disposal which would require the proposal to be reviewed and considered by the Cabinet Member for Community and Leisure Services before making a recommendation to the Cabinet Member for Corporate Services.

1.7 Other Implications

1.7.1

1. Financial
2. Staffing
3. Legal
4. Equality Impact Needs Assessment
5. Environmental/Sustainable Development
6. Community Safety
7. Human Rights Act
8. Procurement
9. Asset Management

X
X
X
X
X



1.7.2 Financial

Adoption of the Maidstone Play Strategy 2014-2024 and associated works will involve considerable capital expenditure in the region of £1.8 million.

1.7.3 Legal

If non strategic play areas are to be transferred to other organizations then legal documentation would need to be prepared.

1.7.4 Equality Impact Needs Assessment

This would need to be prepared.

1.7.5 Procurement

All expenditure would have to comply with the Council's Procurement Policy.

1.7.6 Asset Management

The improvement of the Council Play Area stock would enable the Council to better manage its assets.

1.8 Relevant Documents

1.8.1 Appendix A - Maidstone Play Strategy – A Strategy for Outdoor Equipped Play Areas 2014-2024

Appendix B - Communities Overview and Scrutiny Committee Recommendation Actions and Implementation Plan 22nd April 2013

1.8.2 Appendix C - Community, Leisure Services and Environment Overview and Scrutiny Committee Actions and Implementation Plan 26th July 2013

1.8.3 Background Documents

1.8.4 None

IS THIS A KEY DECISION REPORT?

Yes

No

If yes, when did it first appear in the Forward Plan?

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This is a Key Decision because:

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Wards/Parishes affected: Downswood and Otham Ward; Otham Parish Council

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How to Comment

Should you have any comments on the issue that is being considered please contact either the relevant Officer or the Member of the Executive who will be taking the decision.

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